DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 393 524 JC 960 234

AUTHOR Santa Rita, Emilio
TITLE The Solution-Focused Supervision Model for Counselors Teaching in the Classroom.
PUB DATE May 96
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; Cooperative Planning; Evaluation Methods; Problem Solving; *School Counselors; *Supervisory Methods; Supervisory Training; Teacher Education; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Supervision; Teaching Methods; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

In supervising counselors who are called upon to function as classroom teachers, a solution-focused intervention model can be effectively adapted to the supervision. In general, solution-focused models emphasize strengths and successes over weaknesses and problems. In the context of supervision, a solution-focused model assumes that supervisees will cooperate with supervisors. Thus, the main task of supervisors is to carefully identify the supervisee's unique cooperative patterns. Supervisors highlight the counselors' positive and productive-teaching behavior patterns and point out exceptions to these behaviors. In addition, the following four solution-focused interventions are applicable to the supervision of counselors working in the classroom: (1) scaling questions, or having counselors track problem situations on a 10-point scale before seeking supervision, at present, and where counselors would like to be in the present; (2) presuppositional questions, which assume that positive changes will occur; (3) the miracle question sequence, which has counselors imagine that a problem has been resolved to determine what would change; and (4) having counselors try behaviors that are out of the ordinary in their classes. Limitations of the model include the possibility that counselors may have wrong goals and dealing with a lack of technical or theoretical knowledge. Includes an example case study. Contains 14 references. (TGI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 393 524

The Solution Focused Supervision Model For Counselors Teaching In The Classroom

by

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
E. Santa Rita
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Emilio Santa Rita
Bronx Community College of the City of New York
181 West & University Avenue
Bronx, NY 10453

JC 960 234

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE SOLUTION-FOCUSED SUPERVISION MODEL FOR COUNSELORS TEACHING IN THE CLASSROOM

The present paper represents an attempt to extend solution-focused interventions into supervising counselors who were called upon to function as classroom teachers. The author believes that the assumptions and interventions of this model have general utility and can be used with any supervisees, regardless of whether they have a teaching or counseling background. The solution-focused model underscores the importance of emphasizing the strengths and successes of supervisees, rather than weaknesses and problems. The model highlights the importance of goal-setting and amplifying small changes and exceptions. Even if the model is not fully adopted, the theoretical assumptions and techniques can provide new ways of establishing a cooperative climate for supervision.

APPLICATION OF SOLUTION-FOCUSED ASSUMPTIONS TO THE CONTEXT OF SUPERVISION

Supervisees Inevitably Cooperate with Supervisors

The solution-focused model assumes that supervisees cooperate with supervisors; the main task of supervisors therefore is to identify carefully supervisees' unique cooperative patterns (deShazer, 1985). There is a wide range of supervisee cooperative response patterns, such as supervisees who respond straightforwardly to supervisory directives, those who modify supervisors' suggestions, those who do the opposite of what has been recommended by supervisors, and so forth. Supervisors need to consider supervisees' response mode when making future recommendations.

Besides identifying and working in the unique cooperative mode of supervisees, the solution-focused model utilizes supervisee language and

beliefs, positive relabeling, humor, and support. Purposive supervisory use of self-disclosure can be useful for normalizing supervisees' struggles in learning to teach or in accepting supervisory recommendations. This author frequently shares with supervisees his initial struggles in learning new ideas and accepting feedback. The solution-focused model utilizes compliments (deShazer, 1985) and cheerleading (deShazer, 1988) with the supervisees while reviewing videotape material or when making suggestions during postsession discussions. This author invariably compliments supervisees on their teaching strengths and their performance in class sessions. Supervisees have repeatedly shared with this author that his use of compliments has provided helpful encouragement and contributed to the development of their sense of professional self-confidence.

Identifying and Amplifying Supervisee Exceptions

The solution-focused model creates with supervisees a double description (Bateson, 1979) of their performance in teaching sessions. Supervisors identify positive and productive-teaching behavior patterns during a session and help supervisees understand what helped to produce this difference. Through this exception-oriented construction of the session, supervisees can make distinctions between positive productive behaviors, in contrast to older, more problematic behavior, and explore conditions under which the "exceptions" occurred. This double description leads to new discoveries about supervisees' performance in specific goal and skill areas. To help facilitate supervisees making these discoveries, this author often utilizes supervisees' language and positive relabeling in the "exception" descriptions so that they are more acceptable to their

their views of themselves as teaching counselors.

> In a recent supervision meeting of this author, a supervisee brought in a videotape of a teaching session in which she had thought she had done a poor job [of getting the whole class to participate] for the second week in a row. Prior to the supervisory meeting, ESR requested that the supervisee locate at least two places on the videotape where she had thought she had done a nice job and any places in the session where she felt stuck. The supervisor began the meeting by having the supervisee show the two segments on the video where she had thought she had done a good job. It was quite clear that the selected positive segments showed considerable progress in getting the class to participate. The supervisor responded to the supervisee's exceptional behaviors with cheerleading (e.g., "I am really impressed with your growth in one week's time!"). Following the cheerleading and complimenting with each exceptional segment of tape, the supervisor utilized amplification questions (e.g., "What will you have to continue to do to get that to happen more often in this class?"). By the end of the supervision meeting, the supervisee left feeling much more self-confident and no longer engaging in problem talk (Gingerich, et al., 1988) about this case.

<u>If It Does Not work, Do Something Different</u>

In the solution-focused model, the supervisor takes advantage of previously successful experiences in supervision and avoids supervisory interventions that have been ineffective in the past. Similarly the supervisor continues supervisory behavior that has been working with a particular supervisee and takes full responsibility for trying something

different when supervision is not progressing (Todd & Seleckman, 1991).

The Supervisee Takes the Lead in Defining the Goals for Supervision

Beginning with the supervision learning contract, supervisees take the lead in establishing their learning goals for supervision. Similarly, supervisees are responsible for identifying their teaching goals for each session. The solution-focused supervisor assists supervisees in identifying small, achievable goals for themselves for their own learning contract for each of their teaching sessions. Scaling questions (deShazer, 1985) are used with supervisees to assist them in establishing small and concrete goals for their learning contract and sessions. Presuppositional questions (O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 1989) are also utilized to elicit from supervisees a visual picture of what goal attainment will look like in particular skill areas.

ESR supervised a teaching counselor who voiced a strong desire in her learning contract to develop skills in purposeful questioning. It was clear, however, after having observed videotapes of teaching sessions that the supervisee needed to slow down and take the time to practice embedding her questions with presuppositional words like "when" and "will." Together, the supervisor and supervisee revised the latter's ambitious goal of trying to learn all the different categories of purposeful questions, to the more modest goal of utilizing presuppositional words with her students (e.g. When you come to class on time...rather than "If you come to class on time..."). Once this supervisee became better skilled at utilizing presuppositional language with her students, she became quicker at picking up the wording of other categories of purposeful questions.

SOLUTION-FOCUSED SUPERVISORY INTERVENTIONS

In this section, four-solution-focused interventions are presented that are quite applicable to the context of solution-focused supervision. As mentioned earlier, there are other interventions of the solution-focused model that can be utilized in supervision other than those mentioned below.

Scaling Questions

DeShazer and his colleagues originally developed scaling questions (deShazer, 1985; 1988; 1991; deShazer et al., 1986) as a tool for assisting clients in establishing small and realistic treatment goals. Scaling questions not only help maintain a clear focus in supervision, but they also serve as a useful quantitative measurement of progress in the goal area across the course of teaching. On a scale from one to ten, supervisees are asked to track the problem situation before seeking supervision, at the present time, and where they would like to be in one week's time.

> With one of the author's supervisees, scaling questions were utilized to help the latter become more specific and concrete in the establishment of a small goal for himself with a challenging discipline problem. The supervisee's main goal for the next session was to try to foster a more cooperative relationship with a disruptive student who considers himself the class clown. When asked where he rated himself on a scale from one to ten wtih teaching counselor/disruptive student cooperation, he saw himself at a 3. The supervisor then inquired with the supervisee what specifically he would have to do in the next class session to reach a 3.5. According

to the supervisee, he would have achieved a 3.5 with this student if he could reserve five minutes of "comedy relief" time toward the end of the class session to afford this student his few minutes of glory - a stand-up routine of telling jokes. The supervisor responded to the supervisee's goal attainment with cheerleading, compliments, and amplifications of this new exceptional interaction with the disruptive student.

Presuppositional Questions

Solution-focused model stresses the importance of speaking the language of change (deShazer, 1988; 1991; Gingerich, deShazer, & Weiner-Davis, 1988; O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 1989) with supervisees. In their research, Gingerich, deShaxer, and Weiner-Davis (1988) found there is a direct relationship between the supervisor's use of "change talk" and positive treatment outcome. Change-oriented supervisors utilize presuppositional words like when and will in the majority of their questions while talking with supervisees about the anticipated teaching behaviors. They also spent the majority of their conference time having supervisees share with them helpful past and present problem-solving and coping strategies.

In our language in supervision, it is assumed that supervisees will continue to make positive growth steps throughout the course of supervision. It has been this author's supervisory experience that when he expects that supervisees will change, his expectancy for change directly influences the supervisees' behavior. For example, if a new supervisee is having difficulty taking charge of sessions with a particular class, I may ask her to describe for me a videotape of herself two sessions later with this class when she will have taken charge

appropriately. While eliciting all the details from the supervisee regarding her videotape of self-mastery, I amplify each positive step toward accomplishing her goal.

Another type of supervisor presuppositional question is derived from the strategic intervention "the illusion of alternatives" (Watzlawick, 1978). For example, I may ask the supervisee in the previous example: When would she like to be successfully in charge of the class - in two weeks or three weeks? Alternatively, I might ask how she wants to take charge - directly or more subtly? This type of supervisory interventive questioning helps establish a frame of reference within which freedom of choice is offered between two alternatives, both of which lead to the same positive outcome of supervisee change.

Pretend the Miracle Happened

This author found deShazer's miracle question sequence (deShazer 1985; 1988; 1991) to be quite useful with supervisees who are feeling stuck or ineffective in their classes. For example, I frequently ask supervisees the following questions: "Suppose prior to your next class a miracle happened and your impasse with them is solved, how will you be able to tell that the miracle happened?" "What will you be doing differently with the class in the session?" "How did you get that to happen?" "What will you have to continue to do to make that happen more often?" Such questions can successfully elicit the supervisee's expertise in finding alternatives when stuck with difficult cases.

I may have a supervisee practice engaging in one of her miracle teaching behaviors in a next session with a particular class and keep track of how the students respond differently to her. With this

supervisory task, I have found it most useful for supervisees to videotape the class session. It is much easier to microanalyze teaching counselor-class interactive differences with the aid of videotape than with other supervisory methods (Berger & Dammann, 1982; Whiffen, 1982).

Do Something Different

One of deShazer's (1985) most effective "skeleton key" interventions for a wide range of problems is the "do something different" task. This is particularly useful when someone is stuck complaining in doing "more-of-the-same" (Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J., & Fisch, R., 1974), in a way that helps to maintain a problematic situation. The supervisee is given the following directive: "Between now and the next time we meet, we would like you to do something different, no matter how strange, weird, or off-the wall what you do might seem. The only important thing is whatever you decide to do, you need to do something different" (deShazer, 1985, p.123). The "do something different" task is a powerful supervisory intervention for changing supervisees' unproductive interactions with students. For example, if a supervisee is too mechanical or stiff with a class that likes to laugh, the supervisees' use of humor could be a viable pathway to solution with this family.

ESR suggested to a supervisee that he should do "something off-the-wall" with a class in which the supervisee was feeling immobilized by the incessant complaining from a particular student. In the past, whenever the supervisee would search for signs of progress or improvement, this student remained negative and complained more. The supervisee himself came up with the following strategy: He would switch chairs with the complainant when she would begin to

complain. The supervisee would then asked this student for advice on how to tackle his own [teaching counselor's]"long list of difficulties." He began his monologue with: "You think you have problems, you want to hear some of mine? Well..." Not only did this intervention create a humorous atmosphere, but the supervisee regained a teaching maneuverability and he was able to elicit from the student "solutions" to her incessant complaints.

LIMITS TO THE SOLUTION SUPERVISORY MODEL

When we present our ideas on the solution-focused model of supervision, questions on the limitations of the model seem to take two typical forms: (1) What if the supervisees have the wrong goals? (2) How do you handle a lack of technical or theoretical knowledge by supervisees? To some extent these questions can be considered reflective of the difficulties supervisors have in trusting supervisees; nevertheless they merit serious answers.

At the extreme, it is obvious that it would be inappropriate for supervisors to relinquish all responsibility. If a supervisee's goal totally ignores issues of student safety or legal responsibility for reporting behavior such as potential suicidal behavior or drug abuse, clearly supervisor's goals must take precedence. Unless time pressure is extreme, it is still most useful to work with supervisee's goals to see whether there will be convergence of goals around such issues.

As Marek et al. (1994) discuss, there is good reason to believe that supervisees' goals and questions reflect their developmental needs at their particular stage of experience and training. While supervisors may

believe that there is a "better" goal for supervision, it is quite likely that supervisees may have difficulty assimilating material unrelated to their goals. Unfortunately, supervisors do not typically adapt their supervisory styles to account for different developmental levels of supervisees.

What if supervisees' needs or goals are some variation of "tell me what to do"? Such a request seems to pose a quandary for the solution-focused supervisor, since the assumption is that supervisees know what they need and premium is placed upon having supervisees find their own answers. Developmentally, it is not unusual for beginning students to need and request straightforward and simple supervisory recommendations. I tend to respect such requests but press supervisees to refine their questions. This reinforces the idea that supervisees possess useful opinions and judgments. It also helps to insure that the answer will be closely related to a well-defined question.

Should supervisors be concerned about "deficits" in knowledge or skill? Other authors on solution-focused supervision (Marek et al., 1994; Thomas, 1994) incorporated an educational component in their models. For the most part, such teaching is most appropriate (and is best assimilated best) when it is requested by supervisees. Supervisors should not be quick to assume that supervisees do not have needed answers or available skills without using the techniques listed above to draw out these positive qualities.

CASE EXAMPLE

The teaching counselor described herself as caught in a power struggle with a teenager around her efforts to get the girl to talk in class. Asked for her criteria of when supervision was helpful, she responded that the supervision would be helpful if she went into her next class session with a "new sense of direction."

When asked to operationalize the "power struggle" by describing a typical sequence, the teaching counselor listed: (1) teaching counselor calls on the student; (2) student covers her face with her notebook and "shuts down" (3) teaching counselor confronts student on avoidance. The teaching counselor described an "incongruent hierarchy" between her and the student as follows: "I have power over her because I am the teacher who can pass or fail her. She has power over me because I can't ma her talk. The supervisor asked the teaching counselor to visualize a discussion between her and the student which flowed easily with no one "winning." When she had this image she was asked to imagine ways of making student respond to her questions. "I could do that around the discussion of her friends and her family because I once saw her showing around a picture of her newborn brother."

The only source of reported discomfort for the teaching counselor was that any direct questioning made the student cringe whereupon she would turn away and hide her face behind a notebook. The teaching counselor was encouraged to describe the smallest positive change she could imagine. Initially she imagined the student talking freely but then she stated that some reluctance might be normal for such a

sheltered student. When asked for less extreme ways that the student could respond she listed saying explicitly "I'd rather not answer the question today." The supervisor suggested smaller steps for the student such as picking up the notebook slowly or peeking out around it to show she was listening. When asked how she could make the atmosphere more playful, the teaching counselor thought that she could point to the students' notebooks and allow students to hide their face when they do not want to respond.

The supervisor asked if the teaching counselor found stories helpful. When encouraged to do so, the supervisor told two stories, one in which he encouraged a student to "write" his answer" if class participation was too anxiety-provoking. In another example, a student was told to wear dark glasses to signal when he was not ready to talk in class.

Immediate feedback from the teaching counselor indicated that she had felt challenged, as she had originally wished. Supervision had "lightened up" her image of the student hiding her face. The stories also helped her to see some humor in the situation and the experience created more options for her. She reported she was surprised to be asked what worked best for her and how she learned best. She also expected that her teaching skills would receive more scrutiny. She had expected to become unstuck, which she felt did happen. Now she could visualize a positive outcome, whereas before she could not get beyond the seriousness of the situation. The consultation had "turned it 180 degrees."

Congruent with what she had said about herself, she was given the final instruction that her ideas would continue to percolate prior to the next session and that the supervisor would be curious to learn what actually happened. Some weeks later, the teaching counselor wrote to the supervisor to report that she had intervened playfully, encouraging the student to hide her face if things got too tense for herself. She believed that the atmosphere had changed dramatically.

This consultation illustrates how solution-focused supervision can help a supervisee to develop a unique solution that fits the supervisee's personality although she did not "believe" the "rah-rah" approach of solution-focused therapy. By working carefully with the supervisee's framework and goals, working toward small changes and amplifying exceptions, it was possible to help a supervisee transform a difficult case.

CONCLUSION

The solution-focused model of supervision continues to evolve. We already are experiencing a radical transformation to more collaborative supervisory relationships, and we believe that we have only begun to realize the full potential of the model. We invite the reader to join us in this process for co-creating a new model of the supervisory relationship.

References

Bateson, G. (1979). Mind and nature: A necessary unity. New York: E.P. Dutton.

Berger, M., & Dammann, C. (1982). Live supervision as context, treatment, and training. Family Process, 21, 337-344.

deShazer, S. (1985). Keys to solution in brief therapy. New York: W.W. Norton.

deShazer, S., Berg, I.K., Lipchik, E., Nunnally, E., Molnar, A., Gingerich, W., & Weiner-Davis, M. (1986). Brief therapy: Focused solution development. Family Process, 24, 207-222.

deShazer, S. (1988). Clues: Investigating solutions to brief therapy. New York: W.W. Norton.

deShazer, S. (1991). Putting difference to work. New York: W.W. Norton.

Gingerich, W., & deShazer, S., & Weiner-Davis, M. (1988). Constructing change: A research view of interviewing. In E. Lipchik (Ed.), Interviewing, (pp.21-31). Rockville: Aspen.

Marek, L.I., Dandifer, D.M., Beach, A., Coward, R.L., & Protinsky, H.O. (1994). Supervision without the problem: A model of solution-focused supervision. Journal of Family Psychotherapy, 5, 57-64.

O'Hanlon, W.H., & Weiner-Davis, M. (1989). In search of solutions: A new direction in psychotherapy. New York: W.W. Norton.

Thomas, F.N. (1994). Solution-oriented supervision: The coaxing of expertise. The Family Journal, 2, 11-18.

Todd, T.C., & Seleckman, M.D. (1991). Beyond structural-strategic family therapy. In T.C. Todd and M.D. Sleckman (Eds.), Family therapy approaches with adolescent substance abusers. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Watzlawick, P. (1978). The language of change. New York: Basic Books.

Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J., & Fisch, R. (1974). Change Principles of problem formation and problem resolution. New York: W.W. Norton.

Whiffen, R. (1982). The use of videotape in supervision In R. Whiffen and J.Byng-Hall (Eds.), Family therapy supervision: Recent developments in practice. New York: Grune & Stratton.